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ABSTRACT

Providing comprehensive services for the elderly in local communities presents planners and potential users with a complex set of problems. The development of new or expanded service to the elderly was examined within an ecologically informed resource dependency model to assess the effect on service expansion of organizational maintenance factors (resource competition, environmental security, organizational dependency), external pressure from planning, funding and community sources, perceptions about service needs and attitudes about problems posed by elderly clients. A survey of 480 human service agencies in 12 metropolitan communities revealed that 88 agencies had expanded to serve the elderly. These agencies were compared with those that had not expanded. The results showed that expanding agencies had significantly higher levels of competition, environmental uncertainty, organizational dependency and need for resources than non-expanding agencies. Their directors perceived expansion through collaboration as profitable for the agency as well as clients. Views about unmet service needs and limited community resources did not differentiate the groups and all agencies reported low external pressure. Expanding agencies' directors considered ageism and problems associated with the elderly less important than did heads of other agencies, and reported lack of funds as the major problem in innovation for the elderly. The findings tend to provide support for the resource dependency model. (Author/NRB)

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DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE EXPANSION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES: ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS OR NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY?

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Introduction

Developing comprehensive services for the elderly in local communities presents planners, policy makers, groups concerned with life conditions for the elderly and the potential users of services with a complex set of problems. Not only is it necessary to identify needs for services and to design and finance appropriate programs to meet these needs and to overcome prejudices about the elderly, it is also necessary to work within the local human service system to effectively use existing agencies and resources to better serve elderly people.

At the local level, a variety of existing agencies have the staff and experience required to provide the major portion of the total package of services necessary for a comprehensive system. The already established agencies can adapt existing services, increase the emphasis on older clients in current programs and initiate new programs that fit well within their specific domains. But, as those who attempt to stimulate the expansion of existing agencies are well aware, it is extremely difficult to obtain the cooperation of local agencies and to use the agencies and programs already in place as the foundation for an expanded, more comprehensive set of services for older people.

This paper examines a variety of factors that have been identified as determinants of agency actions to assess their relationships to actual development of services to elderly clients by a variety of human service agencies in 12 metropolitan areas in Ohio and Michigan.

Research model

Many factors prevent expansion of services to the elderly -- lack of funds, pressures from other client groups for services, attitudes and actions

of local planning organizations, perceptions of community needs, attitudes toward the elderly, lack of staff time to develop programs, failure to recognize needs or to see how the agency could expand -- the list is easily lengthened, but this is sufficient to illustrate the point. The reasons given by agency directors and social planners and identified in research on service delivery and organizational behavior fit into two main themes.

First, organizations try to act to insure their long-term survival and growth (Thompson, 1967). They seek resources needed to maintain the organization itself, including legitimation, money, supporters (Warren, 1972) and to act in ways the leaders think will increase the organization's chances of access to a steady supply of resources required for survival (Benson, 1975). Thus, this perspective assumes that if redirection of funds, staff and time or shifts in client emphases are perceived as probably productive steps to take to preserve and/or increase the agency's standing in the community and with local funding bodies, then the agency's leaders will attempt such redirections. Because they are not in the market system and operate in an uncertain environment (Emery and Trist, 1965), human service organizations are generally very vulnerable to pressure from actual or potential funding sources, pressure groups and various constituencies. They face complex survival and growth related problems,and because of the structure of the human service sector in local communities, are dependent on other organizations in their work. They are in competition with other organizations for both authority and resources and, in addition, may be required to provide certain programs and to formally interact with other organizations. Thus, agency leaders have restricted control over the agency's work.

Second, human service workers share important service ideals (Turk, 1973) and seek to help others as resources permit and as they are aware of needs

and possible productive approaches. This theme is widely accepted by local and state planners and stimulates a variety of educational efforts such as conferences, the establishment of task forces by local planning organizations such as United Way, the Area Office on Aging, the Community Mental Health Board and other interested parties. Persuasion and education are the foundations and, generally, an important and basic assumption is that agencies can and will expand services, redirect resources or develop new programs if their leaders are aware of the problem and encouraged. Frequently, the encouragement is non-financial. The educational approaches directed toward human service personnel, community leaders and local residents include identification of needs of the elderly and appropriate services, efforts to decrease prejudices about the elderly and efforts to develop coalitions to press for financing for services for the elderly. In the 12 communities studied in this research, local ageing planning offices directed a majority of their efforts to such persuasive and educational efforts.

The problem of intra-agency service expansion is closely related to the problem of developing informal and formal cooperative relationships among organizations and the study of inter-organizational relationships, which is a related type of expansion, and to work on innovation. Much of this work uses a general approach related to resource dependency and enriched by ideas from ecology.

From a general, ecologically informed model of resource dependency and competition stimulating service redirection, inter-agency linkage and innovation (e.g work of Benson, 1975; Cook, 1977; Aiken and Hage, 1968; Hall et al, 1977; Schmidt and Kochan, 1977; Stinchcombe, 1965; Sheldon, 1978; Aldrich, 1976 and 1979; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Weirich et al, 1977; Gillespie and Perry, 1975; Lehman, 1975), theoretical and empirical work

leads to predictions that major organizational determinants of expansion include: direct competition for resources among human service agencies; competition for domain (or ecological niche); dependency on other agencies for resources needed in the agency's own work; environmental uncertainty; resource scarcity; agency power or status within the organizational hierarchy; and expectations of financial rewards for expansion.

Drawing upon the experiences of workers in the human service sector of local communities, other expected determinants are related to the concerns of agency leaders about the level of services and resources committed to human services in the local community, perceptions about unmet needs for service and belief in the value of developing a more comprehensive and more integrated local service delivery system. External pressure to initiate new programs or to serve difficult client groups from planning and funding sources is another important reason for domain expansion. Because ageism is sometimes through to affect the willingness of staff to work with the elderly, the relationships of a variety of attitudes about serving the elderly related to service expansion is also included.

Sources of data and method of analysis

To explore these ideas, information is used about 479 social service agencies in 12 middle size metropolitan areas obtained through lengthy, structured interviews with agency directors supplemented by self-completed questionnaires and material from agency records, community directories and from local planning agencies.[1] Using information about agency services and

[1]Included communities are those with 1975 metrpolitan area population of between 200,000 and 1,000,000; 95 per cent of all agencies are included in this sample. Information was collected in 1979.

clients, 88 agencies were identified which were not established to serve the elderly but with special services designed for older clients (e.g. Senior Services, Elderly Day Care Center, Senior Nutrition Program, Senior Workers' Program, etc.). Most such Secondary Aging agencies provide only one or two of these elderly care services such as a nutritional program or special leisure time activities or provide special health assessments, home aides, friendly visiting, day/respite care and other similar programs earmarked for older people in the community. Many other agencies probably serve the elderly through their regular programming; these 88 agencies are one which had specifically expanded their services to this target population, and a high proportion had done so during the past five years. Seventy-two per cent of the agencies in this study do not offer special services for the elderly (n=391).

Agency directors identified local organizations and groups with which the agency is linked in some way related to its task domain and the number of mentioned links forms the Dependency score. (Details of items are in the Appendix.) The number of mentions of organizations in a similar ecological niche is the Domain Similarity score. Another type of competition, Direct Competition, is the number of mentions of competition for resources or clients.

A measure of agency Position (or status in the system's organizational hierarchy (Stinchcombe, 1965)) is the proportion received by the agency of all mentions made by all agencies in the community of organizations and groups as sources for needed resources. The score indicates the extent the agency is considered by other agencies in the community as having command of significant resources this type of organization values (e.g. clients, staff, authority, legitimacy, knowledge, prestige, etc.).

Other indicators are developed from questions to the director that use a five point response pattern ranging from not at all (1) through very greatly (5). Scales with alpha $\geq$ .80 were developed and simple additive indexes

used when this minimal alpha criterion was not met. Environmental Uncertainty is a scale consisting of estimates of the extent actions of various groups and organizations are problems. The Rewards measure uses scales related to assessment of benefits and costs in expansions through collaborations and Rewards equals benefits minus costs.

Directors assessed the agency's problem with financial shortages, Perceived Resource Scarcity, and the Value of Expansion as a source of funds, and these are single item measures using a five point response. The estimate of how great a problem is Limited Community Resource is a single item, also. A summed measure of the estimate of the extent of unmet needs in the community for 34 types of services is the general Unmet Needs indicator and six of these items are used to create an Elderly Unmet Needs score.

The sum of sources identified as extra-agency influence for a variety of topics related to agency expansion and differentiation is used as External Influences. A second approach to examining external factors uses reports of pressures to expand through collaboration from United Way, the Area Office on Aging, the Community Mental Health Board and the local welfare department. Items used to examine prejudices toward the elderly as problems in providing services to the elderly are summarized in the Appendix.

Information for the measures of Dependency, Domain Similarity, Direct Competition, Position and External Influences comes from all 479 agencies. Because of missing cases for some measures, the N for Environmental Uncertainty, Rewards, Perceived Resource Scarcity, Value of Expansion and both unment needs measures as well as the problems in elderly services is lower and is roughly N=65 for Expanding Agencies and N=300 for the remainder.

In this report, agencies that have expanded domain to include special services for the elderly are compared to all those which did not so expand using the t statistic to examine differences between the two groups of agencies for various organizational and attitudinal factors expected to cause such expansion. The use of two- or one-tailed signficance levels is noted in each table. It is important to recognize these data come from a cross-sectional study and, thus, cannot be used to show conditions and perceptions prior to service expansion. This is an important limitation in drawing conclusions with this limited information. Further, although analyses of the effect of these indicators on inter-agency cooperation (a type of expansion) using multiple correlation/regression provides useful information about the way these variables work together to produce inter-agency expansion, the information about aging expansion is not amenable to that approach, and the relative effect of each variable cannot be examined.

Findings

The overall perspective guiding this analysis, an ecologically informed resource dependency model, posits agencies will try to differentiate services (and expanding to serve new client groups is one method of differentiation) in response to needs for resources and for a secure niche within which to seek to survive. Domain Similarity, Dependency and Environmental Uncertainty are expected to stimulate expansion. Further, since resources are limited and human service organizations are mutually dependent for support from a set of commonweal resources, Direct Competition and Perceived Resource Scarcity are expected to be important stimuli as well. Thus, the two groups of agencies are expected to differ on these measures with Expanding Agencies having higher scores.

The information shown in Table 1 provides support for these ideas. Those agencies that have expanded services to the old report a higher number of agencies that do similar work, serve similar clients or depend on the same basic funding source than do those not expanding. Expanding Agencies are in less secure environmental niches than the others in the community and, in addition, they report more linkages with other agencies in search of clients information, cooperation and support etc. than do those in the not expanding groups as shown by differences in Domain Similarity and Dependency.

Table 1 about here

Although the inter-group differences are not as great when Environmental Uncertainty and Perceived Resource Scarcity are considered, the direction of the scores is as expected.

Direct Competition is another factor considered important in this theoretical model and, although Expanding Agencies as a group do have higher Direct Competition scores than the remaining agencies, the within groups differences mean this factor is not as clearly an important one for Expanding Agencies.

Those agencies that expanded services are more likely to be considered sources of valued resources by other agencies than are those that did not expand (see Position scores in Table 1), and although others consider them of high status, the leaders of this group report somewhat higher levels of concern with financial shortages than do the leaders of agencies that did not expand to serve the old.

The two groups of agencies are not very different in the overall levels of External Influence. However, when a different measure is used and the several sources of external pressure to expand through collaboration

TABLE 1 ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS RELATED TO EXPANSION OF SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY

	Expanding Agencies		Other Agencies		t test	Significance level*
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.		
Domain Similarity	9.19	7.62	5.74	6.69	3.93	.00
Dependency on other agencies	26.28	14.94	22.91	14.85	1.91	.03
Environmental Uncertainty	5.10	1.52	4.74	1.53	1.68	.05
Direct Competition	9.72	10.09	8.44	10.17	1.07	.15
Perceived Resource Scarcity	3.85	1.19	3.02	1.17	1.64	.05
Position in human services system	1.30	.75	1.07	.68	2.84	.00
External Influences related to expansion	6.84	4.54	6.45	5.18	--	--

*One-tailed test

TABLE 2 EXTERNAL PRESSURES TO EXPAND SERVICES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Source of pressure	Expanding Agencies		Other Agencies		t test	Significance level*
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.		
Local United Way	1.97	1.11	1.91	1.09	.37	--
Area Office on Aging	2.00	1.07	1.45	.84	3.91	.00
Community Mental Health Board	1.48	.87	1.66	.96	-1.44	.15
Community Action Agency	1.30	.61	1.43	.78	-1.47	.14
Local welfare department	1.41	.83	1.68	.92	-2.15	.03

Spearman rank order correlations between expanding agencies and other agencies, $r_s = .10$

*two-tailed test

are considered, the effect of pressure from the Area Office on Aging is evident (Table 2). The two groups report similar overall levels of pressure

Table 2 about here

from planning and funding organizations, but are dissimilar when the different sources of pressure are considered (r_s=.10). Through pressure on the Expanding Agencies, these Area Offices on Aging seem to have had some effect. These data do not provide bases for spculating about the process of influencing such expansion or why AoA influence on the other agencies is so low.

Using ideas expressed by local planning and leaders, these data are used to examine the effect of various attitudinal factors on service expansion with the expectation that opinions about limited community resources, assessments of unmet needs for services, especially services for the elderly, beliefs about the need for more comprehensive and integrated service delivery systems and expectations for improved service and better use of resources from expansion through collaboration will be related to agency differentiation and service expansion. As the information in Table 3 shows, opinions about Limited Community Resources, Unment Needs and Elderly Unmet Needs are similar across the two groups of agencies are are not important

Table 3 about here

factors in decisions about service expansion. In contrast, attitudes about the worth of expansion (both intra-agency expansion and expansion through inter-agency collaborations) do differentiate the groups. Directors of Expanding Agencies have higher scores on Value in Expansion, System Beliefs

TABLE 3 ATTITUDINAL FACTORS RELATED TO EXPANSION OF SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY

	Expanding Agencies		Other Agencies		t test	Signif-igance level*
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.		
Needs for resources and services						
Limited Community Resources	3.02	1.23	2.88	1.00	1.00	--
Unmet Needs	20.73	5.85	19.74	6.54	1.21	--
Elderly Unmet Needs	14.94	9.29	13.84	8.57	.99	--
Views about expansion						
System Beliefs	3.58	.90	3.37	.74	1.90	.03
Value in Expansion	3.48	1.11	3.25	1.30	1.54	.06
Rewards	5.52	8.24	3.06	6.84	2.39	.01

*One tailed test

and Rewards than do directors of those agencies which did not expand to serve the elderly.

Of note, the indicators of Value in Expansion and Rewards are attitudinal measures related to organizational survival/expansion; expansion is seen as a means of getting additional resources and the rewards in expansion are benefits to the agency itself.

Some involved in aging services development consider negative attitudes about the elderly as barriers and additionally cite special difficulties related to serving the elderly as deterrents. Agency heads were asked to assess how much of a problem each of the factors in Table 4 is in serving the elderly. The items are not the directors' opinions about the elderly; they are reflections of judgments as to the relevance of these factors.

The direction of the differences and the overall scores shown in Table 4 indicate those running agencies which have expanded services to the elderly consider the problems listed as less severe than do other directors. Most of these items are not considered major problems by agency directors (3=some problem). The two items receiving the highest scores concern costs.

Table 4 about here

Although the two groups of directors differ in their estimates of the effect of ageism, neither group considers such attitudes as significant problems. However, characteristics of the elderly are viewed as somewhat relevant, particularly their fears that involvement with social agencies will relate to loss of independence.

These findings indicate efforts to change attitudes about the elderly in order to increase elderly care programming are not as needed as are efforts

TABLE 4 ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEMS IN SERVING THE ELDERLY

	Expanding Agencies		Other Agencies		t test	Signif-igance level*
	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.		
Ageism						
Dislike of involvement with elderly	2.19	.93	2.42	.80	-1.94	.06
Difficulties in working with elderly	2.14	.86	2.48	.98	-2.83	.01
Lack of need for special services	2.63	.99	2.96	1.06	-2.41	.03
Elderly themselves						
Not effective pressure group	2.72	1.10	2.92	1.14	-1.32	.19
Fear of loss of independence	2.91	1.10	3.17	.96	-1.76	.07
Agency related						
Lack of rewards for agency	1.90	1.00	2.25	1.08	-2.32	.02
Services are too costly	3.34	1.02	3.33	.98	--	---
Finding service locations	2.53	1.20	2.88	1.09	-2.17	.04
Requires specially trained staff	2.71	1.09	2.89	1.00	-1.30	--
Funds are not available	3.80	1.03	3.45	1.04	2.46	.01

*Two tailed test

to provide additional resources and help agencies with concrete problems such as staff training and finding suitable locations for such services. Additionally, they support the conclusion that organizational factors are more important than attitudinal ones in encouraging expansion of services.

Conclusion

The pattern of findings in this analysis of human service agencies in 12 communities is that expansion of services to the elderly is affected by organizational maintenance and survival factors, and there is general support for the resource dependency model. Service delivery needs and problems are not related to service expansion for these agencies. Further, the directors do not consider prejudices toward the old to be major barriers to expansion; instead costs and lack of funds are more important problems.

Pressure from the local Area Office on Aging seems to be one way to stimulate service expansion. Other avenues suggested by the information in Table 4 relate to funding such services and helping agencies with practical difficulties.

Based on these data, it seems efforts to persuade agencies to develop programs to meet the needs of older people and educational efforts about needs are fairly ineffective strategies. Frank recognition of organizational needs for resources, of the reality of interagency competition , of the way attempts to differentiate domains relate to innovation and attention to ways to meet these needs through elderly care programming are more productive routes to service expansion.

Agency needs for resources and uncertainty about a long-term secure niche in the human service system as well as Environment Uncertainty need to be exploited by those interested in developing effective aging service delivery systems.

As noted earlier, the conclusions drawn from these data have important limitations. Cross-sectional information can suggest relationships between possible causes and eventual service expansion but cannot show the 'cause' preceded the expansion. Further, this analysis strategy is very limited due to the nature of the information that can be utilized,and it does not permit any assessment of the relative importance of these factors.

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APPENDIX

Dependency	Number of mentions to: Which agencies does your agency rely on to deliver your own services? With which agencies do you exchange opinions, information and ideas? Which agencies provide your agency with cooperation and support? Which agencies good opinion is important? Which agencies have influence over what your agency does? Which agencies send people to your agency for service? Which ones do you send people to for services?
Domain Similarity	Number of mentions to: Which agencies provide services that are similar to those your agency provides? Which agencies generally serve the same client groups that your agency serves? Which agencies are most likely to get money from the same sources as your agency?
Direct Competition	Number of mentions to: Which agencies compete with yours for resources? Which agencies compete with yours for clients?
Position (status)	Number mentions to: Which agencies have the most influence over decisions about human services in this community? Which agencies have the most prestige? With which agencies is your agency involved on community committees and planning task forces? and all items in Dependency;# made in the community is summed. The number received by the Focal agency is summed and the proportion received of all mentions made is the Position score
Environmental Uncertainty	Based on estimates of degree of problem to agency for: Policies and actions of local Mental Health Board, local welfare or social services department, local area office on aging and local United Way; attitudes of other agencies and attitudes of community leaders
Rewards	Based on question: To what extent do each of the following affect coordination of services or agency collaboration: collaboration takes too much time, financial costs are too great, it is difficult for staff from different agencies to work together, we lack control of other agency's staff, collaboration means other agencies may have too much to say over how things are done in this agency, collaboration means our facilities would be over-used (Costs measures); saves our agency money and staff time, coordination helps us serve our clients better, our agency receives new funds for collaborating, good for public relations (Benefits measures). Benefits-costs=Rewards

System Beliefs	Based on responses to question: To what extent do each of the following affect the coordination of services or agency collaboration: community resources are used in a better way, previously unhelped clients receive services, staff like to work in collaborative programs
Perceived Resource Scarcity	How much of a problem to your agency are financial shortages?
Limited Community Resources	How much of a problem to your agency is limited range of services in community to meet people's needs?
Value in Expansion	For your organization, how important is participation in special programs or services to get additional funds through contracts, grants, Title XX contracts and the like?
External Influences	Which persons, groups or things on this list have an influence over decisions in your agency? Questions used: decisions about changing or modifying existing programs and services, decisions about providing new or different services or programs, decisions about serving different or additional groups of people Number mentions for all questions is the score
Elderly Unmet Needs	Please estimate the level of unmet need in the community for each of these services: CHORE services, friendly visiting, help for senior citizens, recreational programs for older adults,day care for adults, home health care, homemaker services. Score is sum of responses.
Problems in serving the elderly	In your opinion, how much of a problem is each of the following in providing services for the elderly? Specially trained staff is not available Funds are not available The elderly are not an effective pressure group Special services are too costly People find it difficult to work with the elderly Older people fear loss of independence and dignity if they use services People dislike being involved with the elderly There are few rewards to any agencies that provide such services Most people who are older do not need special services Finding locations for serving the elderly